

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Maclean Cabin

other name/site number: 24MO1501

2. Location

street & number: Seeley Lake Recreational Residences, Block C, Lot 12

not for publication: n/a

city/town: Seeley Lake

vicinity: n/a

state: Montana code: MT county: Missoula code: 063 zip code: 59868

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally.

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Montana State Historic Preservation Office

State or Federal agency or bureau

(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

 entered in the National Register

 see continuation sheet

 determined eligible for the National Register

 see continuation sheet

 determined not eligible for the National Register

 see continuation sheet

 removed from the National Register

 see continuation sheet

 other (explain):

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private

Number of Resources within Property

Category of Property: Building(s)

Contributing Noncontributing

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the
National Register: n/a

4 0 buildings

0 0 sites

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

0 0 structures

0 1 objects

4 1 Total

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

DOMESTIC/camp

DOMESTIC/secondary structure

Current Functions:

DOMESTIC/camp

DOMESTIC/secondary structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification: Rustic

OTHER/Rustic

Materials:

foundation: cement

walls: Wood: Log

roof: Metal: Tin

other: n/a

Narrative Description

The Maclean Cabin is a recreation residence established under special use permit with the Lolo National Forest in 1921 by Rev. John Norman Maclean. The site consists of four log buildings on the west side of Seeley Lake in Missoula County, Montana. All four original buildings are still in use by the Maclean family and are in good condition. The four buildings consist of a main cabin; garage/overflow sleeping cabin, icehouse/storage shed and outhouse. Lodgepole pine was harvested near the site and used in the construction of the four buildings.

Main Cabin

The saddle-notched log, one-story cabin features a rectangular footprint on a cinderblock and poured concrete foundation. The cabin exhibits a pyramidal roof with shed extensions to the east and west. The pyramidal section covers the main room of the cabin. There are then two nearly flat sections respectively over the kitchen and bedroom on the west side of the cabin and over the porch on the east side, much like a tent with flap extensions. The original wood shingle roof was replaced with tarpaper, which in turn was updated with a green stony tarpaper around 1960 by Norman Maclean and his son John.

The footprint of the main cabin – its overall exterior dimensions including overhang beyond the joins – is 39' by 23', with the shorter reach running north-south. The cabin has a porch, main or living room, kitchen, and bedroom. The cabin is built on a slope and the portion of the concrete foundation above ground on the front or east side ranges from 8'' to 1' 6'' high, and from 2' 9'' to just over 4' in height on the rear or west side, where the foundation is of cinder block as well as concrete. A small door on the west side of the foundation allows access to the unfinished area beneath the cabin, which is used for storage.

The front porch faces east toward Seeley Lake and offers a broad view of the lake through large screens that occupy most of the three exterior sides of the porch. The screens, which have been replaced at least once, are mounted three feet above the floor. Fitted canvass covers are put up on the screens for protection from the elements in winter. An aluminum (intrusive) screen door is placed in the middle of the east front side of the porch. Current plans are to replace the screen

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, B, C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a

Significant Person(s): Norman Maclean

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Areas of Significance:

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION; LITERATURE;
ARCHITECTURE

Period(s) of Significance: 1921-1949

Significant Dates: 1921, 1934, 1949

Architect/Builder: Reverend John Norman Maclean

Narrative Statement of Significance

This historic property is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A, B and C. It has excellent integrity of setting, materials, design, location, feeling and association. The Maclean Cabin is a significant, early 20th century recreational cabin that is linked to the expansion of outdoor recreation as a leisurely pastime in an increasingly urbanized society, as well as patterns of recreational property development on federal lands during that era. Reverend John N. Maclean sited this recreational property in 1921, during early efforts by the USDA Forest Service to promote the proliferation of recreational cabins within its boundaries by offering special use permits for the express purpose of recreational development. For these associations, it is eligible under Criterion A. The cabin gains additional significance under Criterion B for its associations with the literary career of nationally-known author Norman Maclean, who wrote portions of *A River Runs Through It* and *Young Men and Fire* at the cabin. Built by the owner and a variety of family members, the cabin is a charming example of the rustic log building tradition associated in the minds of Montanans with shelter in the undeveloped landscapes of the state. In its well-preserved state, the Maclean Cabin exemplifies sturdy cabin construction methods of the early 1900s. For these important attributes, the Maclean Cabin is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C.

Criterion A : The Maclean Cabin is eligible under Criterion A because of its history as an early recreation residence on the Seeley Lake District of the Lolo National Forest. It was one of the first recreational residences on Seeley Lake with the lease approved in 1921 to the Rev. John N. Maclean. The Maclean cabin is an excellent example of what the Forest Service envisioned the recreation residence program to look like.

Recreational Development of National Forest Lands

In 1891, a Presidential proclamation created the first Federal “forest reserves” in the United States, set aside under public ownership. The Organic Act of 1897 set forth a philosophy and program for managing America’s forestlands, and the following year, the first forest rangers were put into service in the mountainous west. In addition to such activities as grazing, the reserves also appealed to a populace that increasingly sought solace and recreation in nature, particularly in proximity to emerging urban centers on the West Coast and in Colorado. By 1902, federal regulations addressed the increasing popularity of the reserve lands and allowed for limited recreational development at popular destinations including hot springs and lakes.

Management of the forest reserves became the domain of the Bureau of Forestry under the Department of Agriculture in 1905, and as the first Chief, Gifford Pinchot emphasized the active use of the National Forests for a variety of uses such as: logging, grazing, water power, firewood collection, and recreation, including summer residences.¹ Following the impulse to expand recreational opportunities within the nation’s forests, Congress passed the Term Occupancy Act of March 4, 1915 making it possible for private individuals “to permit the use and occupancy of suitable areas of land within the national forests, not exceeding five acres and for periods not exceeding thirty years, for the purpose of constructing or maintaining summer homes and stores.”²

In 1917, the Forest Service commissioned a national study on the potential and recommended recreational development of the National Forests. The report, by Frank A. Waugh a landscape architect scholar with the Massachusetts Agricultural College, articulated an early version of multiple use in the National Forests, concluding that forest recreation stood

¹ William C. Tweed, *A History of Outdoor Recreation Development in National Forests: 1891-1942*. (Washington, DC: United States Department of Agriculture, National Forest Service, February 1987), p. 1-2.

² Occupancy Permits Act of March 4, 1915 (Ch. 144, 38 Stat. 1086, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 497).

Maclean Cabin
Name of Property

Missoula County, Montana
County and State

9. Major Bibliographic References

(see continuation sheet)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Specify Repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 0.51 Acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	12	309132	5229964

Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)): NE ¼, SW ¼, of Section 28, T17N, R15E

Verbal Boundary Description

Boundary Justification

The boundary is drawn, based on legally recorded boundary lines, to include the buildings and the 0.51 acres for which the Reverend John Norman Maclean received a recreational special use permit from the USDA Forest Service, in 1921.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Justin Moschelle / Archaeologist
organization: USDA Forest Service, Lolo NF **date:** 14 March 2008
street & number: Bldg. 24, Fort Missoula **telephone:** (406) 329-3713
city or town: Missoula **state:** MT **zip code:** 59804

edited by

name/title: John N. Maclean
street & number: 3604 Porter St. NW **telephone:** (202) 966-4879 / (406) 677-3009
city or town: Washington **state:** DC **zip code:** 20016

Property Owner

name/title: John N. Maclean
street & number: 3604 Porter St. NW **telephone:** (202) 966-4879 / (406) 677-3009
city or town: Washington **state:** DC **zip code:** 20016

name/title: Jean Maclean Snyder
street & number: 4845 S. Kenwood Ave.
city or town: Chicago **state:** IL **zip code:** 60615

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7

Maclean Cabin
Missoula County, Montana

Page 1

Description of Resources

door with one similar to the original wooden one (an original of this type has survived on the garage-storage cabin and can serve as a model). The interior porch dimensions are 22' 6''' X 9' 7". The porch is finished with 5" flooring original to the building. Five rotten rafter tails were replaced in the mid-1990s using a Dutchman splice with lag bolts. Two deer heads are mounted in the main room of the cabin and two antler sets are mounted on the porch. A television antenna is placed on the southeast corner of the porch (intrusive).

There are various family heirlooms in the rooms. To give examples: a set of boxing gloves used by the Reverend's sons Norman and Paul and subsequent generations are hung on the porch, a dining table built long ago for the cabin is in the main room, and a chamber pot is in the bedroom. An assortment of original furnishings, such as a rocking chair and fishing tackle, have been loaned to the Seeley Lake Historical Society for display in the society's museum on Highway 83 at the south end of town, where they are part of a popular "Maclean cabin" exhibition. The porch originally had a bench swing, which is now stored in the warehouse. The wall between the porch and the main room of the cabin has a three-panel single light door in the center and windows, each with six glass panels, on either side of the door. The window frames were purchased ready-made, probably at a lumber yard in Missoula.

The main or living room is 15' deep and as wide as the house; there are double windows with twelve glass panes each on both the north and south walls. A cast iron wood stove was built into the old, open fire place in the middle of the west side of the room by Norman Maclean in the late 1970's, after he had retired and begun to stay at the cabin into the fall. The stones for the fire place were hand-picked by the Macleans mostly while on fishing trips to the Blackfoot River; it was the custom to finish the day with a hunt for an appropriate stone. The fireplace was rebuilt to the original pattern when the mortar failed in the 1960's. The stones were dismantled and laid out in a mirror pattern on the floor in front of the fireplace. The fire box was rebuilt, and the stones were then replaced one layer at a time and cemented with fresh mortar. Two beds are on the east wall and a table bench, used as a dining table, and chairs are under the north window. The table and bench were built for the cabin probably in the late 1920's or 1930s. There is a small rack of fluorescent lights and two single bulb swinging lamps on the ceiling. Of the two mounted deer heads in the main room, one is a two-point mule deer and the other a four-point white tail deer. One of the heads is original and probably dates to the 1920's and the other, from the same period, has been remounted with a new cape but using the original antlers. The smaller of the two heads is the first deer shot by Norman Maclean. There is a built-in bookshelf on the south side of the fireplace, part of the 1920's construction, and a stand-alone bookshelf against the south wall that was built by Daniel Maclean, a great-grandson of the Rev. Maclean, while he was a geology student at The University of Montana in the early 1990's.

Behind the main room to the west, the space is about equally divided between a kitchen to the north and a separate bedroom to the south. A frame with no hanging door, to the north of the fireplace, leads into the kitchen, which is about 9' 6'' deep. The kitchen can also be entered from outside through a three-panel single light door on the north side of the building. That door also has an aluminum screen that is to be replaced. The exterior of the kitchen entrance has a wood platform or deck with four steps that was built in 2006, after a similar one built in the 1960's rotted away. An outside utility light is located above the door.

The kitchen has an original built-in sink just below a six-panel window that faces west. On either side of the sink are original floor-to-ceiling shelves for food and utensil storage. The original wood-burning kitchen stove was replaced with a 1970's vintage Coronado electric stove; a utility table made for the cabin in the late 1980s is on the east side of the room and a refrigerator on the north side. The separate bedroom is entered from the kitchen through a frame with no door. There are two six-panel windows in the bedroom, one facing west and one facing south. The room contains a chest of drawers, a commode, a bed, built-in shelves for towels and linen, and a small closet.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7

Maclean Cabin
Missoula County, Montana

Page 2

Garage and Overflow Sleeping

The high level of craftsmanship observable in the main cabin becomes progressively rougher in the outbuildings. The garage/sleeping cabin and outhouse have more space between logs and less perfect saddle joints. The design of these buildings is conventional and far simpler than the main cabin: the garage/sleeping cabin, for example, is a simple rectangle with a steep roof, though it has at least one unique aspect: the north front of the building, originally meant to open to accommodate vehicles, has vertical milled slabs at the corners, each 7' 6" high and 9½" wide. A five panel door with the original screen door is the current entrance. Two of the old garage doors are still there and measure 8' ¾" X 6' 8". Those doors are separated from the corner slabs by more milled lumber, about 2' 10" wide on either side of the doors. The exterior dimensions of the garage, which is of log construction, are 15' 8" east-west and 19' north-south.

The original larch foundation blocks were replaced with cement blocks, but they are not continuous, which means the underside of the cabin is open. Current plans are to make the foundation continuous, perhaps with loose river stone. The garage was modified for overflow sleeping and storage perhaps as early as the late 1920s. It was fitted with a stand-alone stove until the 1950's and was used for several summers as a study by the young Norman Maclean, who wrote portions of a never-published and now long-lost novel there about growing up in Montana. Maclean also wrote portions of his PhD thesis there when he was both a graduate student and English instructor at the University of Chicago, where he eventually became a professor and taught English for more than 40 years. The building has six-light slider windows on both the east and west sides and one six-light hinged window on the south side. The interior is braced with 3" diameter lodgepole pine on the interior walls. The east and west side bracing poles were cut to accommodate window installation. The wooden interior floor and roof are of 5" pine. The interior has two beds, one Singer Sewing machine with a foot pedal, and one steamer trunk. Wooden storage lockers are located at the foot at each bed. In the northwest corner, there is a chest of drawers and a plywood closet. The roofing is composed of green metal roofing over green rolled roofing, and this roof, too, is slated for eventual restoration to wooden shingle.

Outhouse

The current outhouse was constructed in 1934, according to an exchange of letters between the Forest Service and the Rev. Maclean. The outhouse was sited at various locations when the hole underneath was not lined, but presently sits on a more permanent site over a fabricated impermeable liner. The outhouse has a two-hole seat with sliding wooden lids for the holes. One hole is large and the other is small to accommodate children as well as adults, and specifically as a safety measure for children. Clara Davidson Maclean, the Rev. Maclean's wife, insisted that a smaller hole be cut after her grandchildren, Norman's children Jean and John, were born in the 1940's. The structure is made of 8" diameter lodgepole pine with corner construction the same as the north side of the garage. The south elevation, from the bottom of the bottom log to the top of the top log, is 6' 4" and the door is 5' 10" high. The peaked roof is made of 5" tongue and groove construction with green rolled roofing. The floor is made of 2" X 12" planked wood. The seating portion is constructed of 5" tongue and groove. A PVC pipe is used as a vent on the northwest elevation.

Icehouse/Storage Shed

The icehouse/storage shed is of log construction with a dirt floor and no permanent foundation – that is, the bottom logs are flat on the ground. As a consequence, the bottom logs have rotted and the north elevation is sinking into the ground, much like a ship sinking at the stern. Current plans are to replace the rotting portions of logs, using Dutch joints rather than full log replacement where feasible, and restore the structural integrity. The building is square and made of 14' long lodgepole pine logs, 7" to 10" in diameter with saddle joints. The log walls are approximately 6' high and it's another 6' to the top of the sharply-peaked roof. The north and south sides have 1" X 12" rough cut boards extending above the logs

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7

Maclean Cabin
Missoula County, Montana

Page 3

to the roof. The rolled roofing is very badly worn and has come loose in places. The entire building is in a state of distress that will require speedy restorative action if the structure is to be retained.

A heavy sliding door, roughly 4' 4" by 7' with a light window, is mounted in the middle of the south wall. The building originally was filled with sawdust to keep ice for use during the summer months. During those years, the main door was about five feet off the ground and opened at the top of the sawdust pile. Lester Perro, who owned the small hay ranch at Deer Creek and Boy Scout road about a mile to the north, would take horses and a sledge out on Seeley Lake in the winter, hand-cut blocks of ice, and bury them in the sawdust, which kept them fairly intact through all but the hottest summer. This arrangement continued until electricity came to Seeley Lake as part of the national rural electrification program in the 1950's. At that time, the sawdust was removed from the ice house and spread under the new electric power line right-of-way opposite the ice house. The sawdust became the surface for a badminton court, which turned into a major social center as well as exercise place for the Macleans and Croonenberghs. The families often gathered there in late afternoon to play games that spawned rivalries lasting from one season to the next. The ice-house door was cut down and the heavy sliding door, obtained by the Croonenberghs family in Missoula, was added, and the building was turned into a warehouse and tool shed. It was used by both families until the Croonenberghs cabin changed hands in the 1970's, and has been used exclusively by the Macleans ever since.

Stone Monument

The Maclean family, in cooperation with the Missoula Smokejumpers and the Seeley Lake Ranger District, added a stone monument to honor Norman and his wife Jessie Burns Maclean in 1993. The granite memorial, located 29 meters from the northeast corner of the front porch, has become a familiar and honored Seeley Lake landmark. Though small, its bright gray color and placement overlooking the lake make it highly visible. Tourists often pull up their boats at the small beach below to visit the memorial; others walk there from the Seeley Lake Campground just to the South. In the past 15 years a trail has been worn to the memorial, but thus far there has been no incident of vandalism. Because the commemorative stone does not meet the requirements of Criteria Consideration F, is counted as a non-contributing object.

Integrity:

The Maclean family cabin, despite minor modifications such as a new roof, cement foundation, and replacement of rotting porch log ends, retains an extremely high degree of integrity. Indeed, the location, setting, feeling and association remain intact, as does the integrity of the original rustic design, materials and workmanship.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8

Maclean Cabin
Missoula County, Montana

Page 4

Statement of Significance

alongside timber, watershed and grazing as an important and valuable use of these natural, publicly owned resources. His recommendations supported the notion that the Forest Service, in addition to the National Park Service, should cultivate properties for the recreational use and enjoyment of the American public. Large tourist centers, administrative trails and areas for recreational cabin development were all a part of the vision for increasing public use of the forests.³ The United States' involvement in World War I delayed the opening of additional Forest lands to development and the public. However with the conclusion of the war at the end of 1918, and subsequent efforts to put domestic programs back on track, the Forest Service renewed its efforts toward recreational use. During the 1920s, campgrounds proliferated and the American public increasingly took to the woods to go camping, fishing and hiking. However, as agency historian William C. Tweed notes, the emphasis throughout these years was upon providing the setting for recreational activities, for building and running recreational developments, the forests looked to private individuals and enterprises.⁴ The Maclean Cabin on Seeley Lake, in the Lolo National Forest, is representative of this important trend in Forest Service management history.

Throughout Region One of the Forest Service supervisors authorized a number of forest tracts created expressly for use as cabin sites. The emphasis on cabin recreation continued for decades, as correspondence between various Forest supervisors and managers in Montana reveals. The "Forest Service Summer Home Policy" issued in February 1941, opens with the management directive "the greatest good to the greatest number in the long run," and offers guidance on the development of summer home areas. Preserving natural settings and non-interference with the enjoyment of others are two policies, which are emphasized in the outline. The Maclean Cabin was one of the first, with the nearby Croonenberghs, of the Seeley Lake Recreation Residences, and adhered to the Forest Service policy reiterated after 1941 that "as a general rule, it is both impracticable and undesirable, to permit single summer homes in isolated, scattered locations. Several lots usually are surveyed in a group, with adequate spacing between the individual summer homes for separation and privacy." The Macleans were lucky, however, to situate their cabin prior to the 1941 directive to build summer home areas away from highways, lakeshores and scenic features.⁵

By the mid 20th century recreational use on the nearby Lewis & Clark Forest grew from 74,000 visitors in 1929 to 100,000 visitors in 1938, to over 128,000 visitors in 1949. On that forest alone there were 180 summer home sites by 1953;⁶ and scores of recreational properties scattered throughout the mountains of Region One. The Lolo National Forest had fewer recreational cabins than the other forests. Only 33 cabins were built on the Forest, all on Seeley Lake in the vicinity of the Maclean cabin during the 1920s and 1930s. Individual cabin usage was encouraged up until the late 1970s, as increasingly toward the end of the 20th century, the public called into question the exclusiveness of cabin and recreation leases for a select few. By the turn of the 21st century, the tide and forest policy had reversed, resulting in policies to terminate special use permits and often to remove old cabins when they came up for renewal or transfer to new ownership. In recent years, the Forest Service has recognized the historic value of many such recreation cabins and has refocused its evaluative procedures to appreciate the significance of many historic cabins to the history of development and recreation of the National Forests.

Maclean Cabin Construction History

The main cabin was built after 1921, the year the special-use lease was first obtained from the Forest Service by the Rev. John Norman Maclean, a Montana pioneer and pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Missoula. The cabin was to cost

³ Tweed, *A History of Outdoor Recreation Development in National Forests: 1891-1942*, pp. 6-7.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 15.

⁵ Forest Service Summer Home Policy, (United States Department of Agriculture) February 1941.

⁶ *Great Falls Tribune* "Forest Land Used by 180 For Summer Home Sites," December 18, 1953.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8

Maclean Cabin
Missoula County, Montana

Page 5

approximately \$600 to construct with overall dimensions of 18 feet by 46 feet, as proposed to the Forest Service in a letter from the Rev. Maclean.

The cabin was to have three rooms -- a living room, kitchen, and bedroom as well as a front porch -- and was to be built of logs and have a shingle roof. When built, the cabin followed these specifications and an original design by the Rev. Maclean, whose father had been a carpenter. The design included a roof that was steep in the center and sloped gently to either side. The Seeley Lake region is a notorious snow funnel and neighbors mocked the design, saying that after a few years of heavy snows the roof would buckle at the seams. To the contrary, the roof has stood up for nearly nine decades though it can leak at the seams, especially during the spring melt.

The Forest Service sent the Rev. Maclean a form notice in early 1922 asking him not to cut any more logs near the lake for the cabin, though the notice probably referred to cutting by others. Maclean had obtained his lease only late the previous year and had had time to fell few or no trees by early 1922. In any case, the Forest Service said a stand of lodgepole pine on the opposite, east side of the lake had been set aside for further cutting by lease holders and this is the likely source of most of the trees used to build the cabin.

At that time, there was a commercial sawmill at the north end of Seeley Lake where the Forest Service Ranger Station stands today. The Macleans' immediate neighbor to the north, the Croonenberghs family, who by happenstance also lived next to the Macleans in Missoula, bought milled timber for their cabin at the sawmill, according to the late George Croonenberghs, a son of the original owner, Louis Croonenberghs. George said that the Macleans also obtained milled timber there for roofs and floors. (The Croonenberghs cabin was built in 1919 before there was a road on the west side of Seeley Lake, and consequently the Croonenberghs had to bring construction materials across the lake by boat or barge. By the time the Maclean cabin was built a road had been put in on the West side of the lake, along the route the Boy Scout or West Side Seeley Road follows today).

The construction of the main Maclean cabin and outbuildings was the work of several summers. Family lore maintains that the Rev. Maclean wanted to site his cabin back from the lakefront so as not to present an eyesore to lake users, but close enough so that the lake was visible from the porch. The chosen site achieves both those goals. The main cabin went up first and was followed by the garage, which was also used to hang meat during the winter -- Norman Maclean, the Reverend's son, had a pungent memory of a bear being hung there one year into March, by which time it had begun to thaw. Only in later years was the garage turned into an overflow sleeping cabin and then toward the end of the 20th century into a storage area. The ice house, now used as a warehouse, was the last building to be constructed.

The main cabin was built in stages. The original foundation consisted of blocks cut from the one giant Western Larch that had to be felled to make way for the cabin. Both the Forest Service and the Rev. Maclean wanted to site the cabin where the fewest possible giant larch would have to be sacrificed, according to family lore and a letter of instruction from the Forest Service. The larch blocks were upended and placed at what were to be the corners of the cabin, and a few additional supporting blocks were placed between them. With the grain facing upwards and thus exposed to the elements the wood blocks deteriorated over the years. By contrast, the lodgepole pine used for the sides of the cabin, which were laid horizontal to the ground, have weathered the years in remarkably good condition, thanks also to regular applications of linseed oil and turpentine. During the 1960's the larch foundation blocks were replaced by cinder blocks and poured concrete that fully enclosed the area under the cabin.⁷

⁷ The cabin sits in a nearly 500 acre stand of giant larch saved by the first chief of the Forest Service, Gifford Pinchot, at the urging of Jim Girard, an early Ranger (a memorial stone to Girard was placed opposite the Camp Paxon turnoff at the Clearwater outlet bridge along Boy Scout road in the 1950s). The loggers were coming down the valley and Girard, realizing the uniqueness of the giant trees convinced Pinchot, who had visited the Swan Valley years earlier, to halt the execution. One of those trees is today the No. 2 Western Larch in the world, according to an international rating

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Maclean Cabin
Missoula County, Montana

Page 6

Once a floor was laid, it was used as a platform for a tent and woodstove while other work was done. The Maclean sons Norman and Paul helped with construction when they could break away from summer jobs. The Rev. Maclean did almost all the precise work himself, such as saddle notching the logs for joins, mostly using a hand hatchet – the joins are Vs with flat bottoms and thus are far less likely to split than the simple Vs often cut today with chain saws. The Rev. Maclean's father, the carpenter, had passed along to his son a large wooden carpenter's chest full of 19th century tools such as planes, draw knives, augurs, et cetera that were cumbersome in appearance but effective in use. Those tools were in fact used at the cabin into the 1960's when they were stolen during a winter break-in of the warehouse. The Rev. Maclean undertook the daunting task of hoisting up the roof supports for the main cabin virtually alone, according to family lore; Norman and Paul had jobs that kept them away that summer. The objects found throughout the cabin are a testament to decades of family recreation there.

Criterion B:

Reverend John N. and Clara Maclean

The Maclean Cabin was designed and constructed by the Reverend John N. Maclean, a prominent Montana Presbyterian minister and Montana pioneer, in the early part of the 20th century. The Rev. Maclean became pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Missoula on Feb. 28, 1909 and served in that post until 1925. In 1913, the Rev. Maclean was offered the presidency of what was then the College of Montana, later the University of Montana, in Missoula. He declined the offer, however, after his congregation passed a resolution, on March 9, 1913, urging him to continue his work as their pastor. The lengthy resolution, which is contained in the church records, states in part, "We feel that his work here is in an unfinished state, and that his presence is necessary for the continued welfare and growth of the congregation." The resolution also pays tribute to his wife, Clara, whose loss would be not only "a severe blow to this church but as well to all religious work in this city." During his tenure and in subsequent years he used the Seeley Lake cabin as a kind of summer Manse, as well as a place of rest and recreation. When church activities declined in the summer, the Rev. and his wife, Clara Davidson Maclean, would often spend the weekdays at the cabin and return to Missoula only for the Sunday church services. Members of the congregation often visited the Macleans at the cabin for socializing and to discuss church and personal matters. Maclean regularly performed services such as marriages and baptisms at the cabin or nearby. For example, he married Kenneth and Dorothy Burns, the brother and sister-in-law of Jessie Maclean, in front of the cabin's fireplace.⁸

The congregation of the First Presbyterian Church grew to such an extent during Maclean's tenure that a new church was needed. Maclean oversaw the building of a brick, Norman-style structure, which was dedicated in April, 1916. Maclean's wife Clara was prominent in church work in her own right. She helped form the Zeta, Clara Maclean and Sentinel Guilds and the Clara Maclean Westminster Guild for High School and College Girls, according to a church history, *First Presbyterian Church, Missoula, Montana, 1876-1976*. The history describes Mrs. Maclean as "devoted,

system, and its age is estimated at 1,000 years. Recent dendrochronology studies have offered a possible explanation for the extraordinary growth of the larch. Fire visited this area about every 25 years, the studies have shown, instead of the more customary 75-year fire regime for larch. The fires may have been ignited, deliberately and otherwise, by Indians who regularly used the area for camping and huckleberry picking – huckleberries thrive on regular burning. The frequent fires kept brush and small trees from building up and creating fire ladders to the branches of the larger trees, and thus enabled the big trees to grow ever bigger. This fire cycle was interrupted by European settlement especially after the Big Burn of 1910, which resulted in a blanket fire exclusion policy in the National Forests. In recent years the Forest Service started an already-successful program to clear smaller trees and brush by mechanical means and by fire from around the big trees, making the area more open and attractive, giving the larger trees better access to moisture and light, and reducing the opportunity for catastrophic fire. As part of this project much clearing has occurred around the Maclean cabin and other cabins along the lake.

⁸ He sequentially married the three Sperry sisters in their home, which was also a commercial roadhouse, just east of Clearwater Junction overlooking the Blackfoot River at what used to be called Sperry's Grade – the old Sperry house still stands there on the north side of Highway 200.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Maclean Cabin
Missoula County, Montana

Page 7

competent, energetic and unwearying ... a social worker of striking ability." She brought those talents to the summer Seeley Lake ministry as well. In 1925, Maclean accepted the post of Executive Secretary of the Synod of Montana for the Presbyterian Church and in that office oversaw church activities throughout the state. The family lived in Helena for a time before moving back to Missoula. The Rev. and Mrs. Maclean continued to use the cabin throughout their lives.

Norman Maclean

Born in Clarinda, Iowa on December 23, 1902, Norman Maclean was the elder son of Rev. John and Clara Maclean. Reverend Maclean oversaw much of the education of the young Norman and his brother Paul until 1913. The family relocated to Missoula, Montana in 1909. The following years were a considerable influence on and inspiration to his writings, appearing prominently in the short story *The Woods, Books, and Truant Officers* (1977), and semi-autobiographical novella *A River Runs Through It* (1976).

Too young to enlist in the military during World War I, Maclean worked in logging camps and for the United States Forest Service in what is now the Bitterroot National Forest of northwestern Montana. The novella *USFS 1919: The Ranger, the Cook, and a Hole in the Sky* and the story "Black Ghost" in *Young Men and Fire* (1992) are semi-fictionalized accounts of these experiences.

Maclean attended Dartmouth College, where he served as editor-in-chief of the humor magazine the *Dartmouth Jack-O-Lantern*. He was also a member of the Sphinx (senior society). He received his Bachelor of Arts in 1924, and chose to remain in Hanover, New Hampshire and serve as an instructor until 1926—a time he recalled in "This Quarter I Am Taking McKeon: A Few Remarks on the Art of Teaching." He began graduate studies in English at the University of Chicago in 1928. Three years later he was hired as a professor at University of Chicago, where he went on to receive three Quantrell Awards for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching. It was during this time that Maclean married Jessie Burns, a red-headed Scots-Irish woman from Wolf Creek, Montana. They later had two children: a daughter Jean (born in 1942), now a lawyer; and a son, John (born in 1943), now a journalist and author of *Fire on the Mountain: The True Story of the South Canyon Fire* (1999), and two other books, *Fire & Ashes* (2003) and *The Thirtymile Fire: A Chronicle of Bravery and Betrayal* (2007).

In 1940, Norman Maclean earned his doctorate from the University of Chicago where during World War II he declined a commission in Naval intelligence to serve as Dean of Students. During the war he also served as Director of the Institute on Military Studies, and co-authored *Manual of Instruction in Military Maps and Aerial Photographs*. Maclean, a scholar of Shakespeare and the Romantic poets, was William Rainey Harper Professor of English at the University of Chicago until he retired in 1973. He then began, as his children Jean and John had often encouraged him, to write down the stories he liked to tell. His most acclaimed work, *A River Runs Through It and Other Stories* was published in 1976, the first work of fiction published by the University of Chicago Press. This title was nominated by a selection committee to receive the Pulitzer Prize in Letters in 1977, but the full committee turned down the nomination and did not award a Pulitzer in that category for the year.

Maclean's books and short stories—ending with *Young Men and Fire* (1992) published posthumously—are noted for their keen adaptation of autobiographical details and lyrical prose. *Young Men and Fire*, a non-fiction account of the tragic 1949 Mann Gulch forest fire, was the winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1992. The University of Chicago Press has announced it will publish a new volume, *The Norman Maclean Reader*, a compendium of unpublished as well as published materials, in November, 2008.

Norman Maclean died in 1990 in Chicago, at the age of 87 of natural causes. Throughout his life, he returned to the family cabin for summers on Seeley Lake and used his experiences there to inform his literature.

The Maclean Cabin's Legacy

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Maclean Cabin
Missoula County, Montana

Page 8

Generations of the Maclean family have had an influence on Montana history and much of that influence has come from ties to the cabin. Books authored by Norman Maclean and his son John Norman Maclean that were written in part at the Maclean Cabin have made Montana and the West more familiar to the nation and the world. The most famous of these is Norman Maclean's *A River Runs Through It*, an acknowledged classic of American literature. The many summers Norman spent at the cabin and fishing the nearby Blackfoot River provided the background for this autobiographical account of life in the early days in Montana. The story recounts the efforts of the Maclean family to deal with Paul, the troubled youngest son who is "beautiful," to use Norman Maclean's word, as he pursues Rainbow trout in the Blackfoot, but fatally self-destructive in his personal life. The writing has been hailed as Shakespearian – Maclean in fact taught Shakespeare at the University of Chicago. The title of the book has entered the common language. The tragic story line – the inability of a loving family to help a deeply troubled member – coupled with the enchantment of Montana, which is evoked in this book as nowhere else in literature, has connected with generations of readers. *A River Runs Through It* was made into a feature film that has altered the landscape of Montana, or at least the fishing landscape. The movie turned fly-fishing from a cult-like activity for the favored few into a national and international fad, and the once-remote Blackfoot River into a must-fish destination for hordes of new enthusiasts. It became common, for example, to see boatloads of fly-fishers from as far away as Japan on the Blackfoot, the Missouri, the Madison and other great Montana rivers dressed in slouch hats and vests, just like the characters in the movie.

Norman Maclean also used the cabin as a base for writing and reporting a second book, *Young Men and Fire*, which introduced the nation to smokejumping and the story of Mann Gulch Fire of 1949, which killed 13 firefighters – 12 smokejumpers and a wilderness guard who had been a smokejumper. Maclean describes in the book how he was alone at the cabin in the summer of 1949 when the fire broke out a hundred miles away near Helena. He locked the cabin door and drove over, enlisted the help of his brother-in-law, Kenneth Burns, who had helped fight the fire, and visited the scene while the place was still smoking. Maclean did not return to the subject of Mann Gulch for many decades. But when he took it up again at the age of 73, after publication of *A River Runs Through It*, he stayed at the cabin for many months each year, often into November, while working on the story. Maclean died in 1991 before the book was published; his children, John and Jean, saw *Young Men and Fire* into print. John proof-read the galleys for the book, and subsequently recorded it as an audio book, while seated at the dining table in the main room of the cabin.

John Maclean has continued his father's tradition of using the cabin as a base to write about Montana and the West. John has published three non-fiction books about courageous firefighters and the fires they bravely fought. The most-noted of these is *Fire on the Mountain*, an account of the South Canyon Fire that claimed 14 firefighter lives in Colorado in 1994 and became the most famous wildland fire since Mann Gulch. The central figure in the book, Don Mackey, was a smokejumper from Montana's Bitterroot Valley. John's other books are *Fire and Ashes*, a collection of fire stories that includes an update on Mann Gulch, and *The Thirtymile Fire: A Chronicle of Bravery and Betrayal*, an account of the 2001 fire by that name in north-central Washington that killed four young firefighters. Like his father, the younger Maclean often stayed at the cabin for three or four months a year to work on these books – his principal residence is in Washington, DC. He continues to use the cabin today to write and report on wildfire and other issues. Most recently, he wrote a Foreword for Stephen J. Pyne's *Year of the Fires*, published by Mountain Press in Missoula in June 2008, in which he describes the Jocko Lakes Fire of 2007 that threatened the Maclean cabin and the town of Seeley Lake.

Criterion C:

On the forested frontiers of North America, log cabin architecture spanned more than four centuries of settlement. In Montana and the West, the traditional log cabin with gable roof and massive stone chimney became ubiquitous in the mountain regions. As western communities were built and the region developed through the second half of the nineteenth century, the log cabin became both a defining element of the built environment and a symbol of the rugged spirit of

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8

Maclean Cabin
Missoula County, Montana

Page 9

western culture. Beyond the time that log building was dictated by necessity, the log cabin remained popular. Indeed, Rustic architecture was the guiding style of parks and forests, and the log cabin the principal building style

The Maclean Cabin, with its honest workmanship, draws upon the basic elements of American log construction. Reliance upon hand-formed native materials, a simple rectilinear form, and sturdy workmanship all contribute to these classic aspects. Although the property consists of modest buildings, they are reflective of the very conscious adoption of rustic construction for various recreational buildings during the early twentieth century.

Forest Service guidance on architecture encouraged rustic building – “Buildings on summer home lots must be of a type and materials appropriate to the forest environment.”⁹ The Maclean Cabin is representative of this directive, and the pride in craftsmanship of the Maclean family.

⁹ Forest Service Summer Home Policy, (United States Department of Agriculture) February 1941..

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9

Maclean Cabin
Missoula County, Montana

Page 10

Bibliography

Maclean, John. Personal Communication. Seeley Lake, MT, 2007/08

Tweed, William C. *A History of Outdoor Recreation Development in National Forests: 1891-1942*. Washington, DC:
United States Department of Agriculture, National Forest Service, February 1987.

Occupancy Permits Act of March 4, 1915 (Ch. 144, 38 Stat. 1086, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 497).

Forest Service Summer Home Policy, (United States Department of Agriculture) February 1941.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

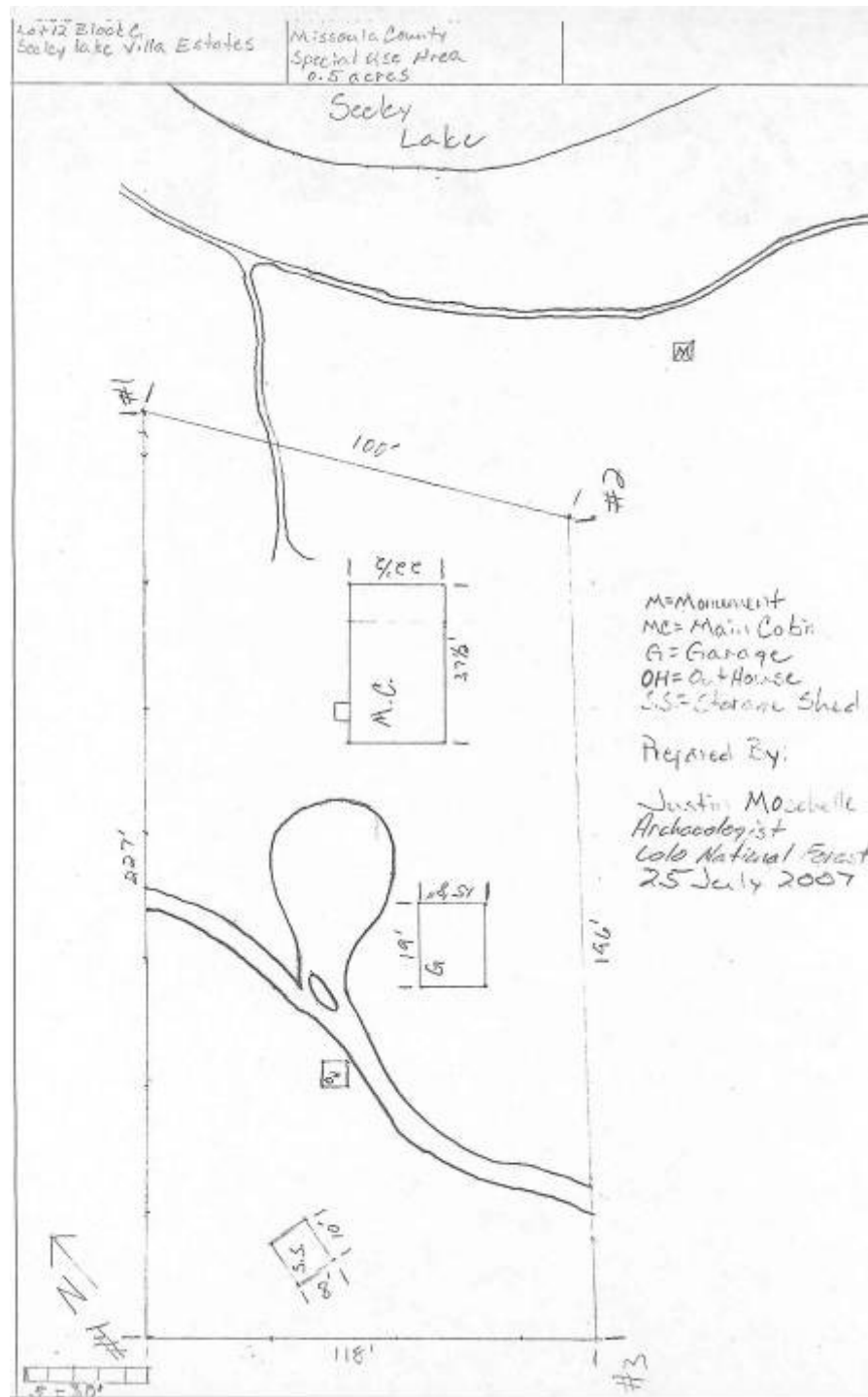
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10

Page 1

Maclean Cabin
Missoula County, MT

Site Map



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10

Page 2

Maclean Cabin
Missoula County, MT



7.5 Minute Map Seeley Lake West

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10

Page 3

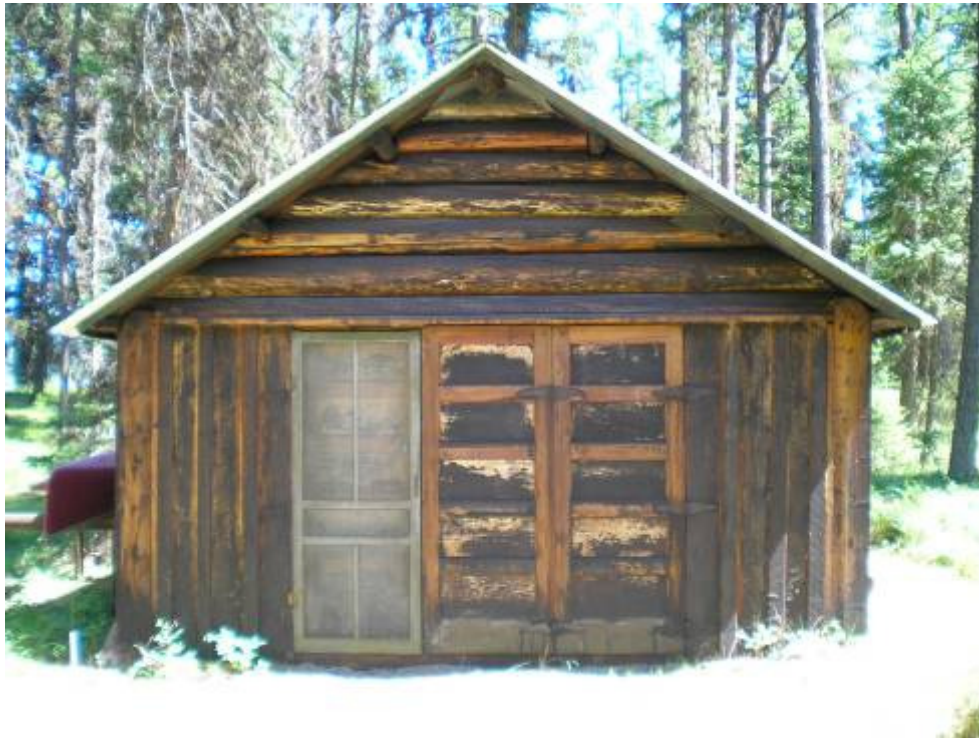
Maclean Cabin
Missoula County, MT



Seeley Lake Recreation Residences Block C
Maclean Cabin is C 12



East elevation of the Main Cabin, John Maclean Recreational Residences.



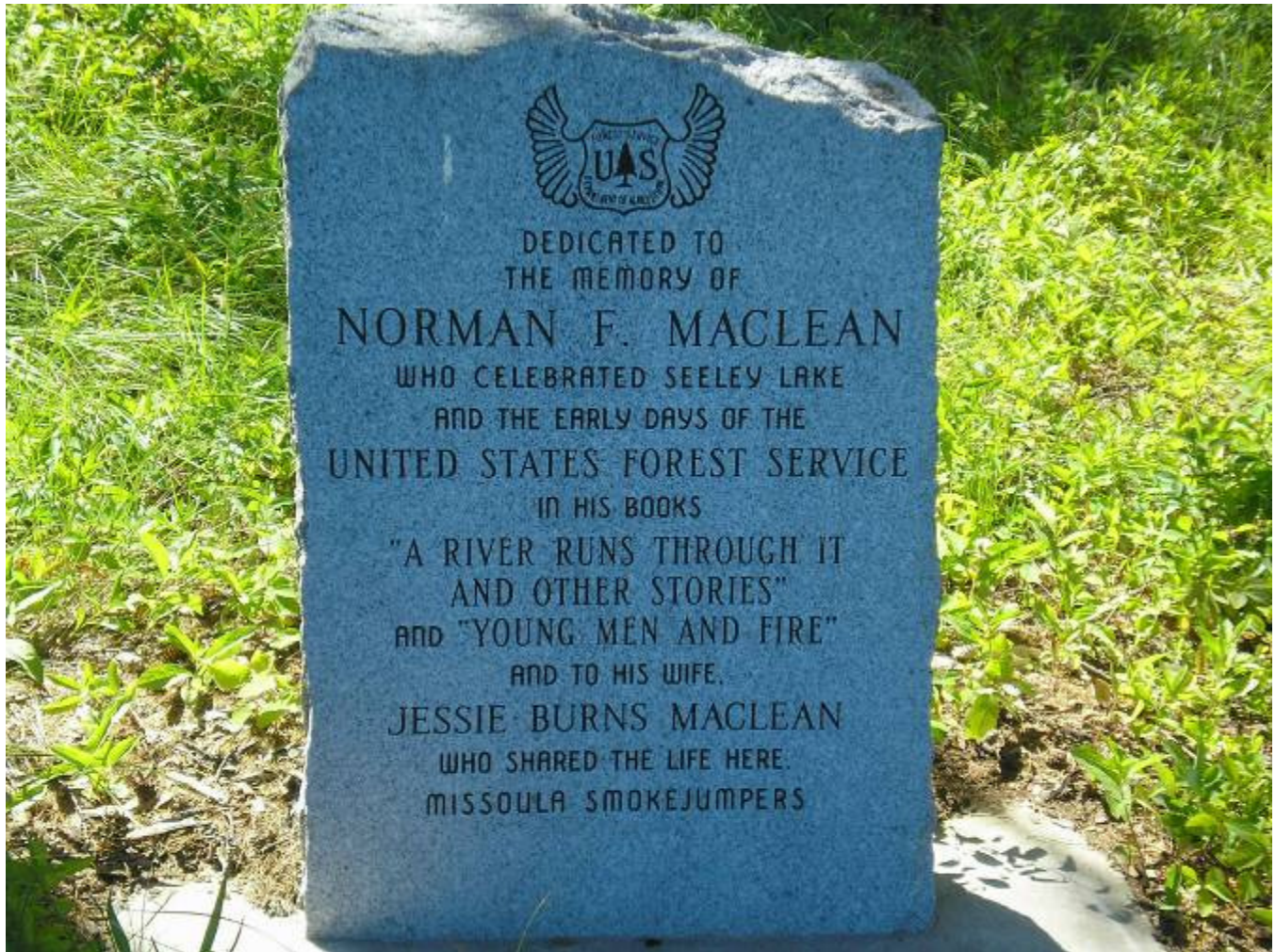
North elevation of the Garage/Overflow sleeping area, John Maclean Recreational Residences.



South elevation of the Outhouse, John Maclean Recreational Residence.



South elevation of the Icehouse/Storage shed, John Maclean Recreational Residence.



Monument erected by the Forest Service and the Maclean family